

Work Package 4 of the Project

Blended Learning Quality-Concepts Optimized for Adult Education

Questionnaire Results: The Learners' Needs

Introduction.

The Objectives of the Work Package 4 is to create a list of absolutely necessary features for the eLearning platform (LMS) used in a Blended Learning course, focusing on the technical and pedagogical background as well as on the learner's situation. Also, additional recommends will be defined for useful features and tools used either inside the LCMS or as additional tools.

In order to achieve that, teachers and trainers of the involved institutions, experienced an e/blended Learning course were asked for their needs, proposals and necessary features for a LMS. The analysis of the results obtained from this questionnaire are presented here.

Method used.

During October and November 2014, an on-line questionnaire on the learners' needs was distributed from the consortium partners to students of previous or current e-learning courses. Since 14/10/2014, **1004** persons responded. Not all the learners replied to all the questions given. The learners that replied were from Greece (571), Spain (211), Italy (152), Austria (34), Finland (24), FYROM (4), Romania (4), Turkey (3) and Albania (1). All the replies were combined and the results are following.

The Questionnaire.

Learners had to fill in an on-line survey that included the following questions:

1. How important do you consider having clear instructions about how to get started and how to find various course components on the platform?
2. How important is the ease of use of the platform and support service (manuals, tutorials, help desk)?
3. How important is for the platform to cover both the face-to-face training activities and the virtual ones?
4. How important is to have a personalized entry page when logging-into the platform (i.e., showing my progress, which chapters I have to revise, etc.)?
5. Is it important that most learning activities are concentrated inside the platform instead of being distributed among many different tools available on the Internet?
6. How important are collaborative working tools within the platform?

7. How important are one-to-one private messaging tools between students and/or students and tutors within the platform?
8. How important is that the platform incorporates gamification elements and/or game mechanisms (rewards, scores, votes,...)?
9. How important is for the platform to be connected to external social media (facebook, linkedin, pinterest, youtube, google+, ...) ?
10. How important is that the platform can manage groups of learners with the possibility of differentiating resources and activities among separate groups?
11. How important is for the learner to be allowed to customize the platform to better suit his/her needs?
12. How important is to easily find materials and information on the platform?
13. How important is a genuinely interactive way of studying on the platform?
14. How important is for working methods and activities on the platform to be new to the learner, so to try new ways of studying?
15. How important is the level of interaction with teachers and tutors through the platform?
16. Are there any other issues about the platform in a blended course that you want to suggest?

The first 15 were closed questions, where learners had to choose one of the following :

1=Needless, 2= Less important, 3= Important, 4= Very important.

In the 16th question, learners had to write their own suggestions.

Results:

The great majority of the people asked found all the issues referred in the questions important or very important.

This means that they want to have in a blended learning course clear instructions about how to get started and how to find various course components on the platform, to surf easily on the platform and the support services , to cover both face-to-face training activities and the virtual ones using the platform and have a personalized entry page when logging-into the platform.

They also asked to have a personalized entry page when logging-into the platform ,to have most learning activities are concentrated inside the platform instead of being distributed among many different tools available on the Internet, to have collaborative working tools within the platform.

They prefer one-to-one private messaging tools between students and/or students and tutors within the platform, which can also has incorporated gamification elements and/or game mechanisms.

Not many people believe that is important to have the platform be connected to external social media.

They ask that the platform can manage groups of learners with the possibility of differentiating resources and activities among separate groups and the learner to be allowed to customize the platform to better suit his/her needs. They want to find easily materials and information and find a genuinely interactive way of studying on the platform.

They believe that if the working methods and activities on the platform are new and try new ways of studying it will be good for them along with the level of interaction with teachers and tutors through the platform.

Totally, 107 trainees send their suggestions using the question 16. These questions were categorized in 8 themes, which were :

- ❖ Reference to their request for direct application to our need.
- ❖ Reference concerning encountered problems with the line connectivity.
- ❖ Reference for asking more chances for interaction.
- ❖ Reference on organizational issues encountered during the course.
- ❖ Reference on platform connected issues.
- ❖ Reference concerning the tutorial support provided.
- ❖ Reference on the educational Issues of the course they had experienced.
- ❖ The last category included various suggestions, not included in previous categories.

There suggestions were mainly concerning their request for direct application to their needs, the connectivity problems encountered, the possibility to have more chances for interaction.

They also discussed some organizational issues encountered during the course, some platform connected issues, tutorial support provided and of course some educational Issues of the course they had experienced.

More analytical results are following at the Annex II:

Interpretation of the results

The goal of this research is to seek to design methodologies that might enable the consortium members to probe and understand what is happening in different parts of the system (as well as the wider field of e-learning itself) . Also we want to analyse the responses carefully for their utility in generating knowledge of the system parts and concurrently, for their potential interactions with and influences within the system itself (for example. Jackson & Schaverien. 2005; Alexander et al., 2006). In this way we work towards gaining a better understanding of complex dynamic systems and the diversity inherent to such systems. Also, we question whether powerful educational collaborations with developers of LMS technologies could be established, with learning as the prime driver of design, to explore the possibilities and distill the principles that might guide future technological innovations.

The results of this research will be used for defining the quality criteria for a Blended learning course, adopting the Castells' view (2001) that:

... we engage in a process of learning by producing, in a virtuous feedback between the diffusion of technology and its enhancement ... It is a proven lesson from the history of technology that users are key producers of the technology, by adapting it to their uses and values, and ultimately transforming the technology itself (p. 28).

The survey was conducted to learners from 9 different countries although the main groups were from Greece, Spain and Italy and they have attended different e-learning or blended learning courses.

They all agreed that the issues referred to the 15 first questions were important or very important for their studies. So the mean values of all the answers ranged from 2.45-3.88 (1=Needless, 2= Less important, 3= Important, 4= Very important).

In a similar, more extended survey performed to US university students (Penny Ralston-Berg, 2014) the results were comparable, concerning the importance of easily finding materials and information on the platform, the degree of genuinely interactive way of studying, the importance of the interaction with teachers and tutors through the platform of the existence of clear instructions and the simplicity of the platform use.

The high importance of collaborative working tools and innovative working methods and activities in the learning process was also presented in the findings of Nataša Hoić-Božić (2008).

Results from the questions 3 (How important is for the platform to cover both the face-to-face training activities and the virtual ones?) and 7 (How important are one-to-one private messaging tools between students and/or students and tutors within the platform?) that cover on issues of interaction between trainers and learners are in accordance with Ginns & Ellis (2007) findings in a relevant research (page 58).

Almost all the questions found important in this research, can be found in the “Quality Matters™ Bill of Rights for Online Learners”

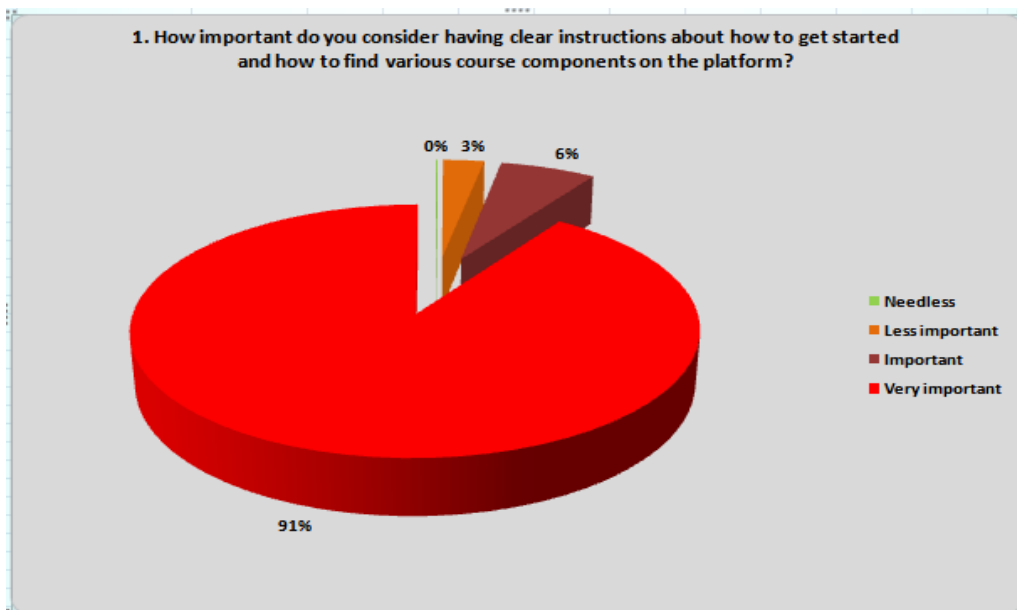
<http://online.collin.edu/QM%20Bill%20of%20Rights%20for%20Online%20Learners%20with%20Preamble.pdf>. This is an resume of the results found in relevant research on learners need (Penny Ralston-Berg, 2014).

Anexxe I . References

- Alexander. S.. Harper. C Anderson. T.. Golja. T.. Lowe. D.. McLaughlan. R.. Schaverien. L.. & Thompson. D. (2006). Towards a mapping of the field of e-learning. In P. Kommers & G. Richards (Eds.). Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications 2006. Chesapeake. VA: AACE. 1636-1642. Retrieved November 27, 2006. from http://www.editlib.org/mdex.cfm?ruseaction=Reader.ViewAbstract&paper_id=23224.
- Castells, M. (2001). The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society, Oxford: Oxford, University Press.
- Ginns, P., & Ellis, R. (2007). Quality in blended learning: Exploring the relations between on-line and face-to-face teaching and learning. *Internet and Higher Education*, 10, 53-64
- Jackson & Schaverien (2005). Developing Research Designs and Methodologies for Investigating Learning in Post graduate e-Learning Contexts (2005) Paper presented at the AARE annual conference PARRAMATTA, 2005.
- Nataša Hoić-Božić (2008), A Blended Learning Approach to Course Design and Implementation. 6th Workshop “Course Development in E-learning Environment”. LOCATION: Rijeka, 25/09/2008.
- Ralston-Berg Penny (2014). Surveying Student Perspectives of Quality: Value of QM Rubric Items. *Internet Learning* Volume 3 Issue 1 - Spring 2014.

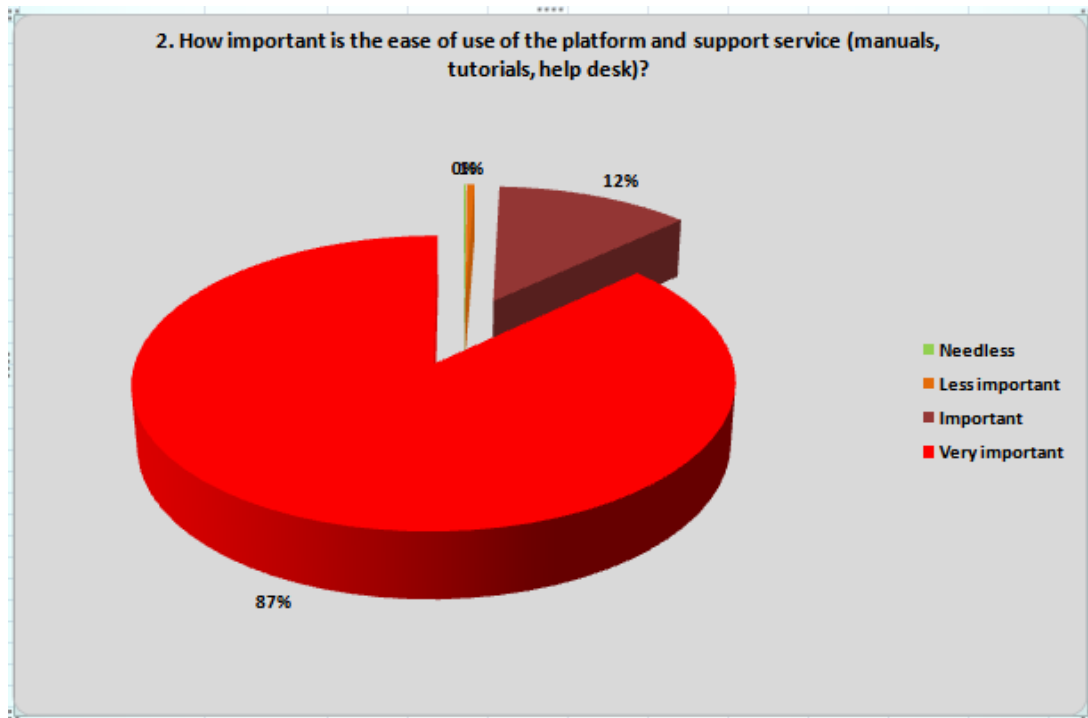
Anexxe II Detailed results.

Question 1. The replies for the first questions are presented in table 1



Number of answers		categorization
1	1	Needless
2	28	Less important
3	65	Important
4	903	Very important
Mean		3,88
Standard Deviation		0,49

Question 2 The The replies from the second question are presented in table 2



Number of answers		categorization
1	1	Needless
2	5	Less important
3	124	Important
4	866	Very important
Mean		3,86
Standard Deviation		0,37

Question 3 The replies from the third question are presented in table 3

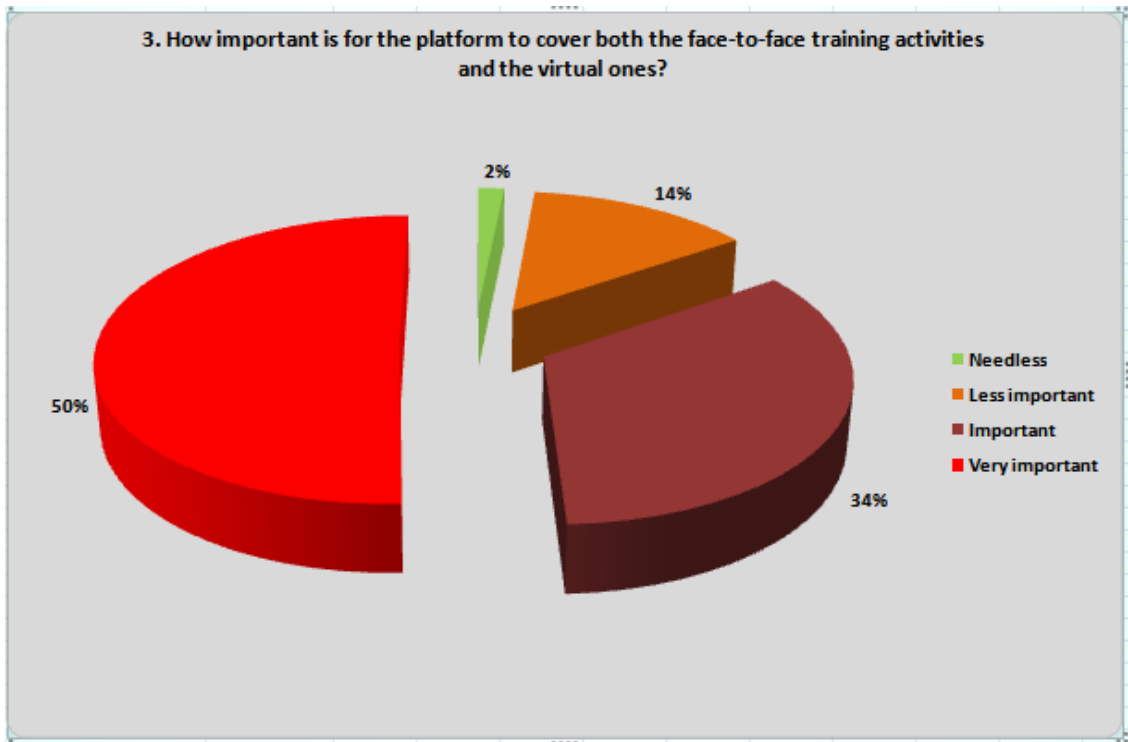
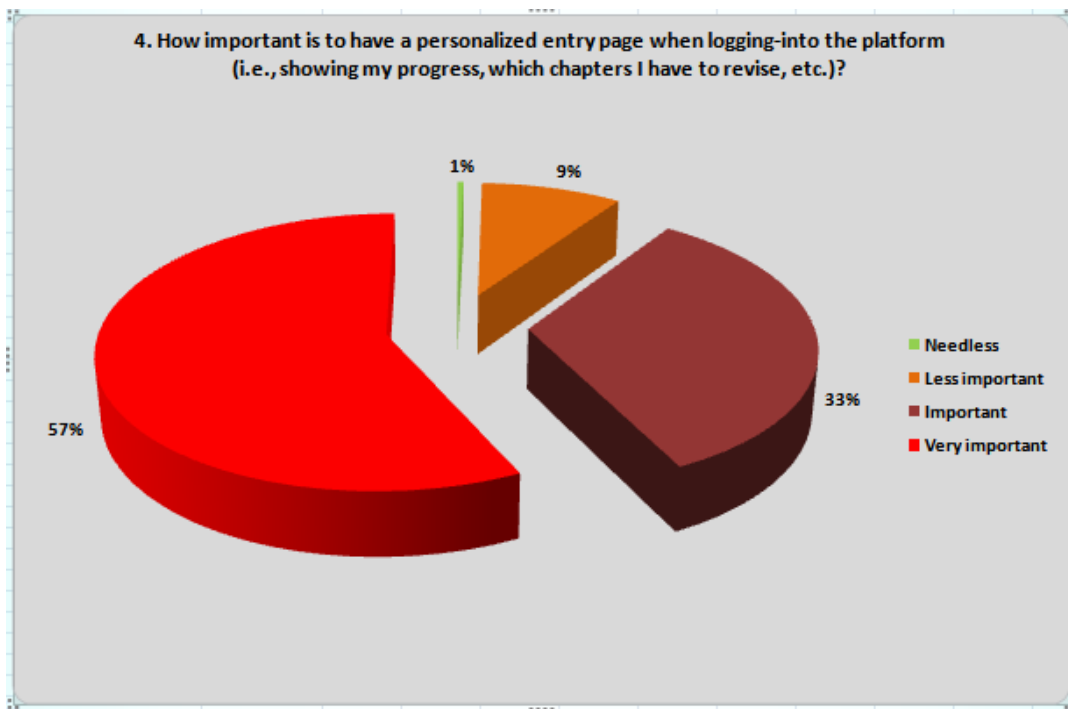


Table 3

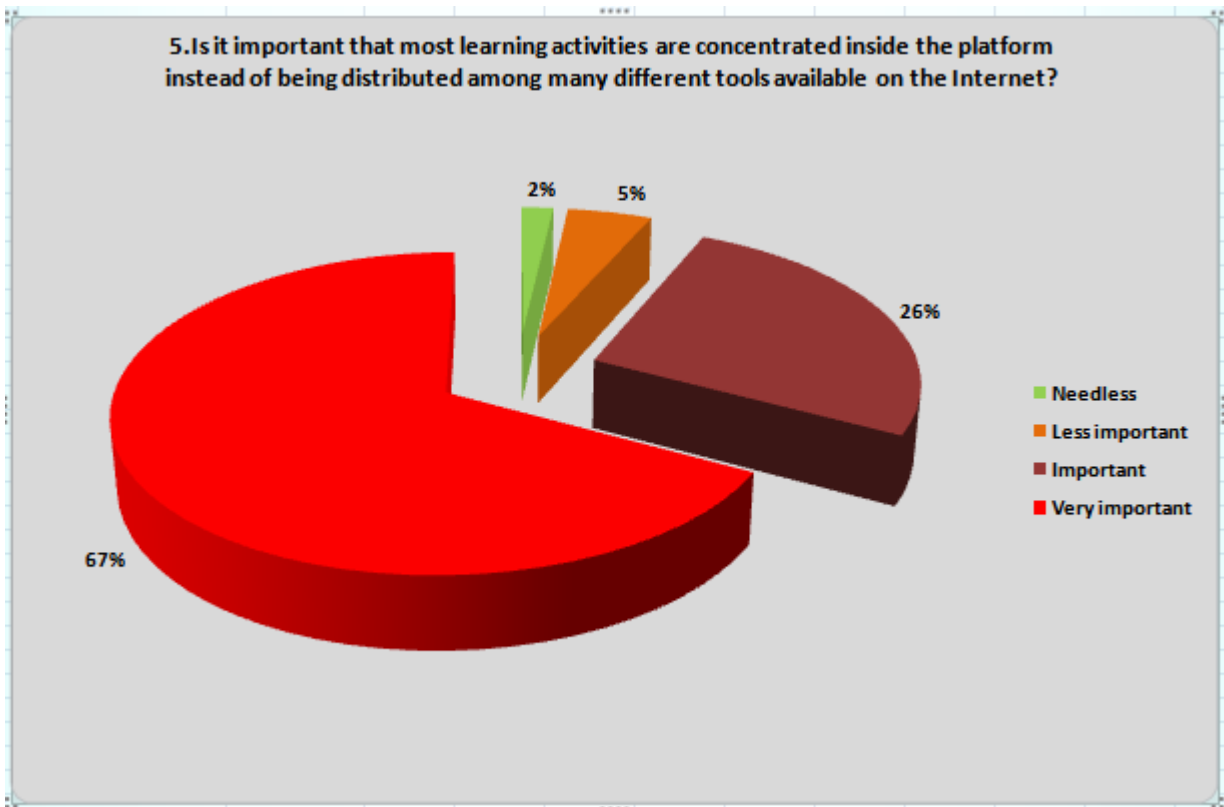
Number of answers		categorization
1	16	Needless
2	138	Less important
3	338	Important
4	504	Very important
Mean		3,34
Standard Deviation		0,83

Question 4. The replies from the fourth question are presented in table 4



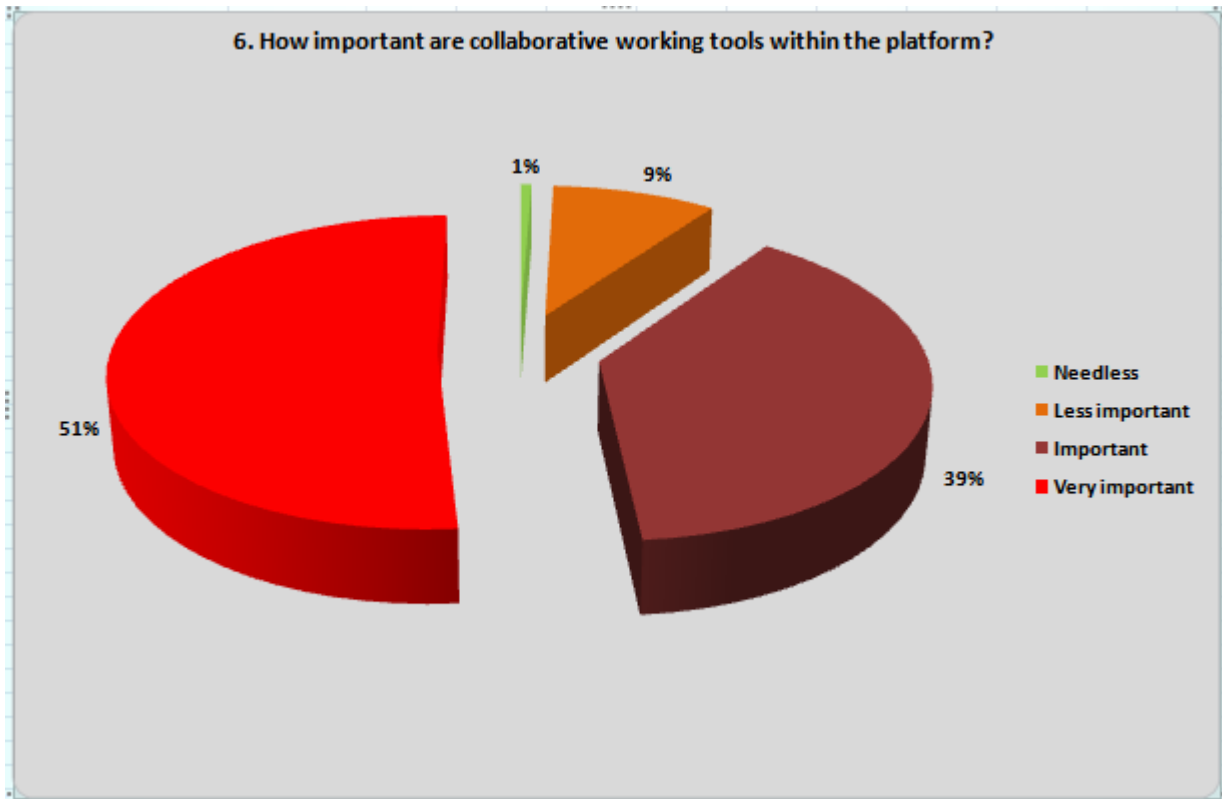
Number of answers		categorization
1	4	Needless
2	91	Less important
3	329	Important
4	567	Very important
Mean		3,47
Standard Deviation		0,68

Question 5 The replies from the fifth question are presented in table 5



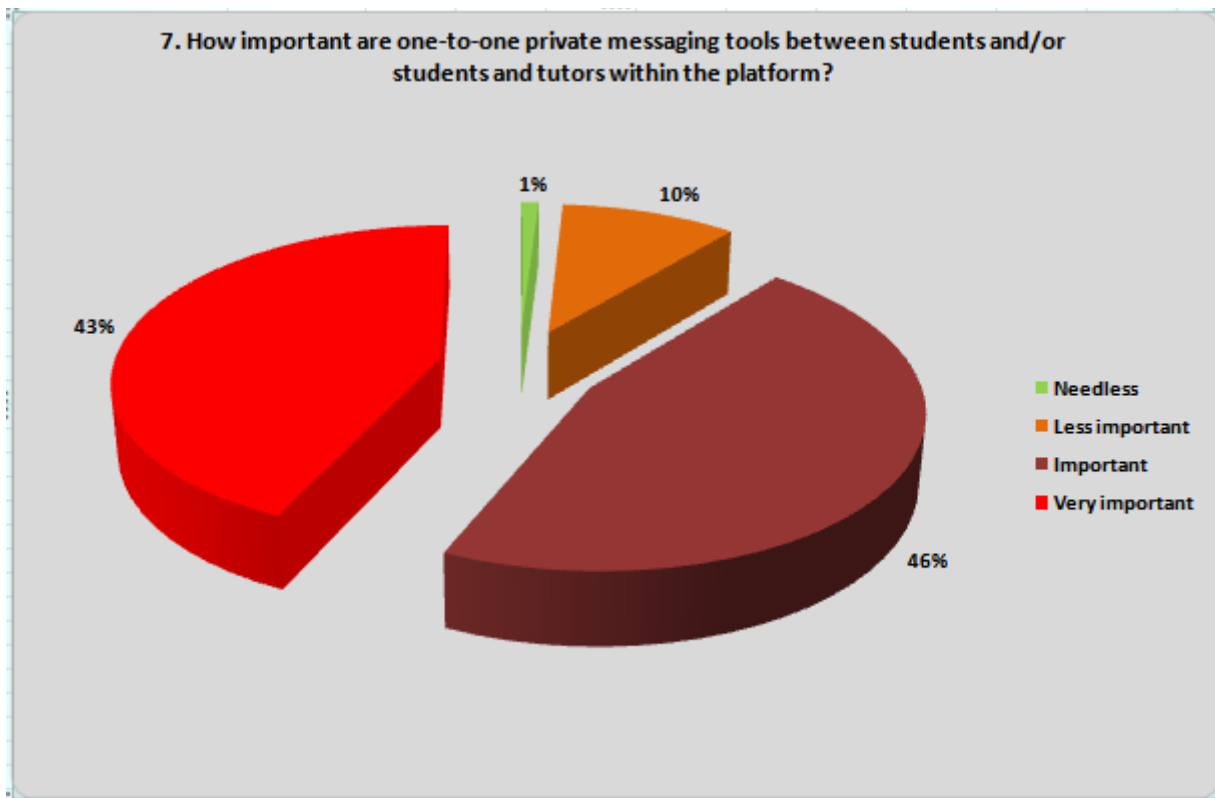
Number of answers		categorization
1	18	Needless
2	48	Less important
3	260	Important
4	667	Very important
Mean		3,59
Standard Deviation		0,76

Question 6 The replies from the sixth question are presented in table 6



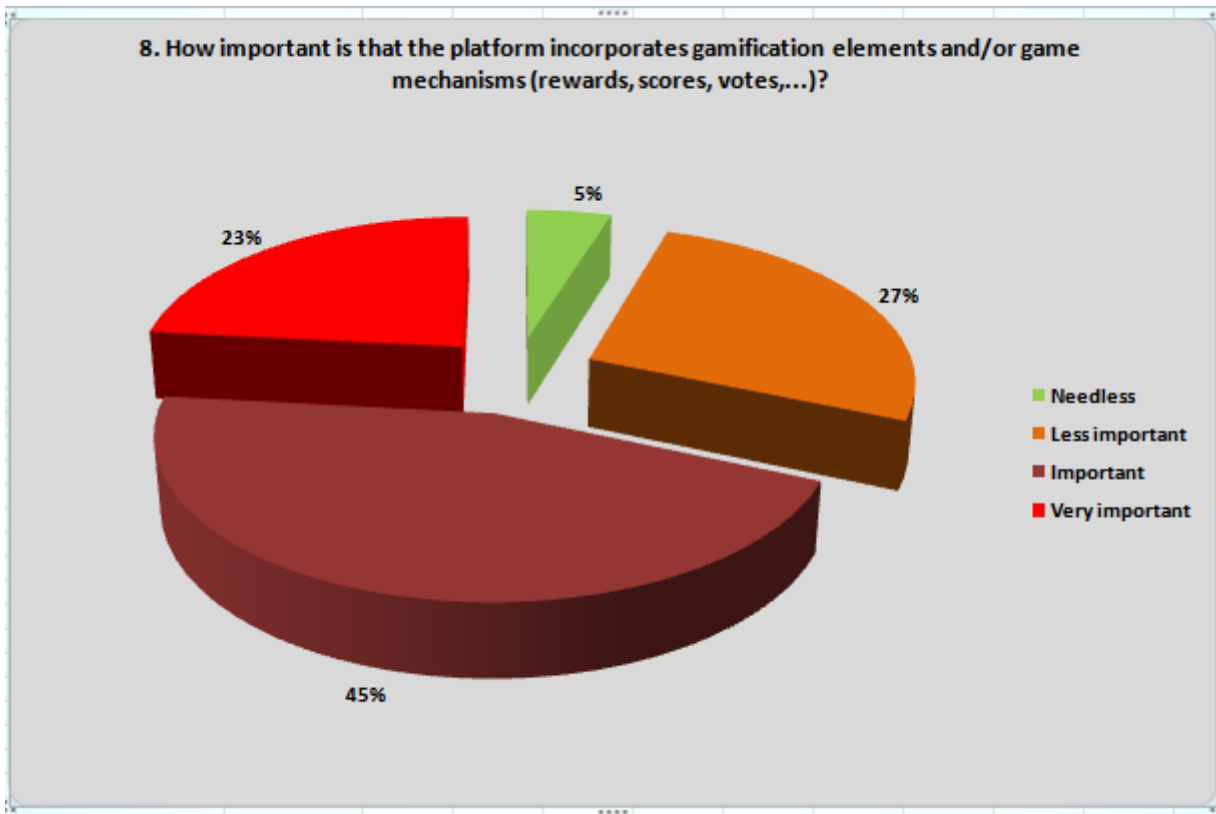
Number of answers		categorization
1	6	Needless
2	92	Less important
3	382	Important
4	507	Very important
Mean		3,41
Standard Deviation		0,73

Question 7 The replies from the seventh question are presented in table 7



Number of answers		categorization
1	10	Needless
2	100	Less important
3	454	Important
4	430	Very important
Mean		3,31
Standard Deviation		0,68

Question 8 The replies from the eighth question are presented in table 8



Number of answers		categorization
1	48	Needless
2	263	Less important
3	448	Important
4	231	Very important
Mean		2,87
Standard Deviation		0,85

Question 9 The replies from the ninth question are presented in table 9

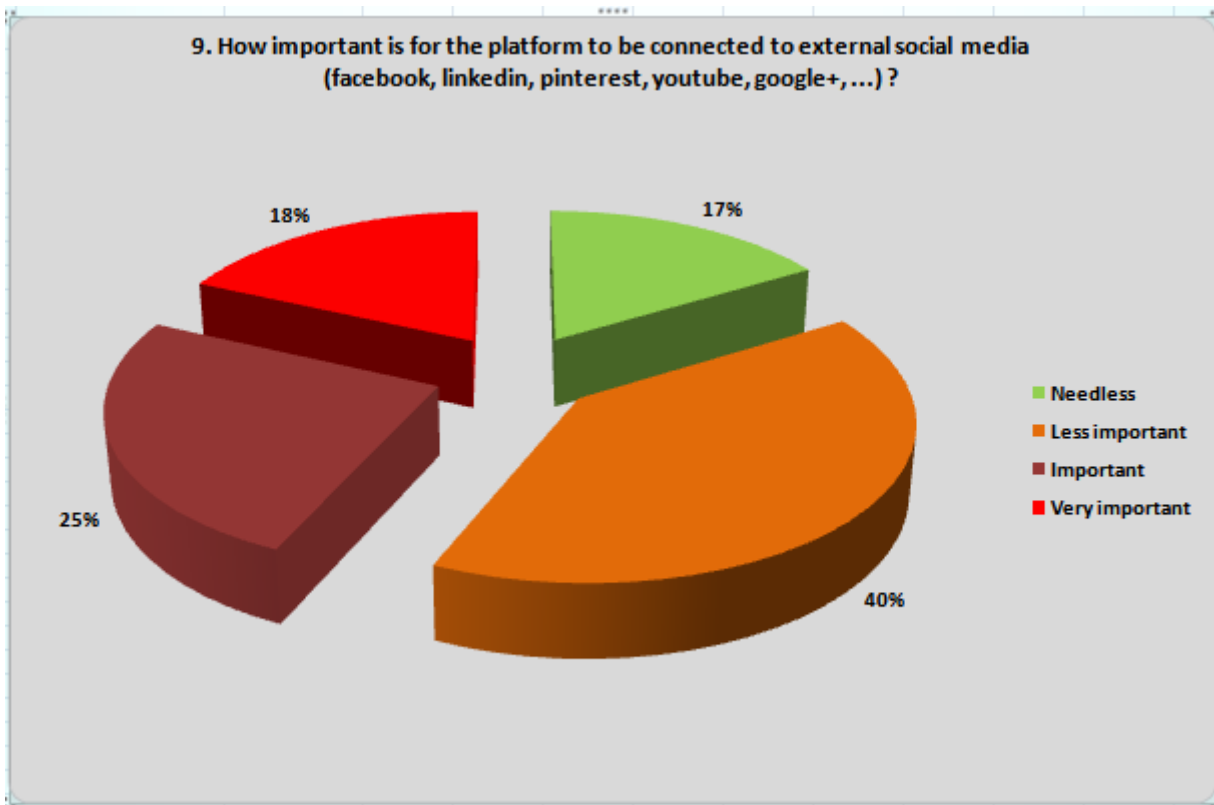
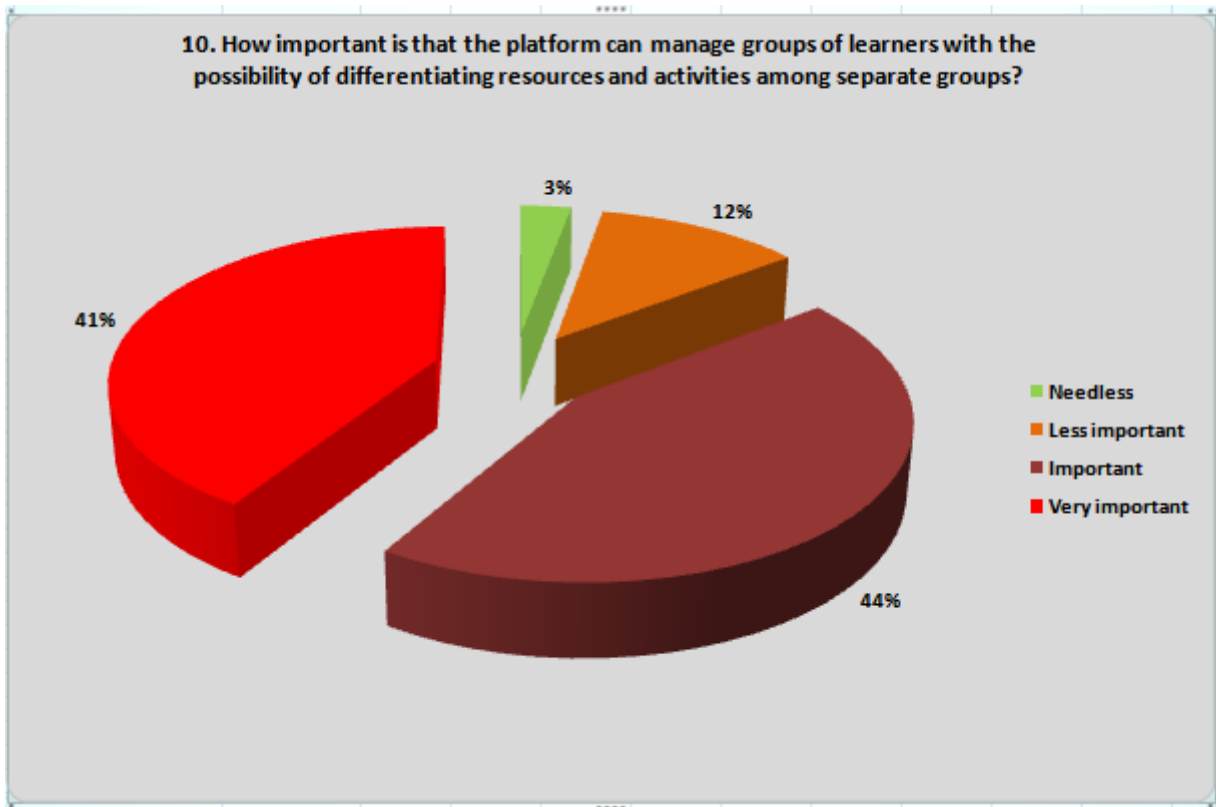


Table 9

Number of answers		categorization
1	163	Needless
2	400	Less important
3	250	Important
4	181	Very important
Mean		2,45
Standard Deviation		1,02

Question 10 The replies from the tenth question are presented in table 10



Number of answers		categorization
1	29	Needless
2	117	Less important
3	439	Important
4	409	Very important
Mean		3,24
Standard Deviation		0,74

Question 11 The replies from the eleventh question are presented in table 11

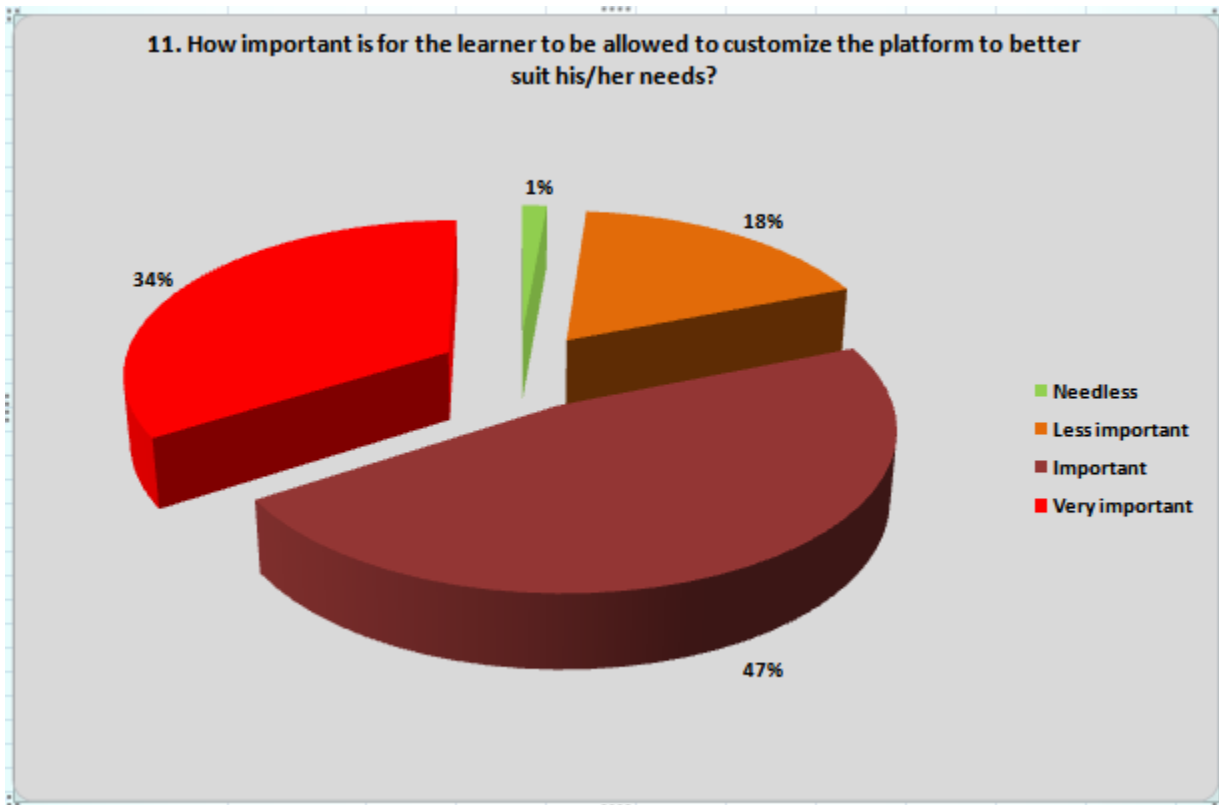
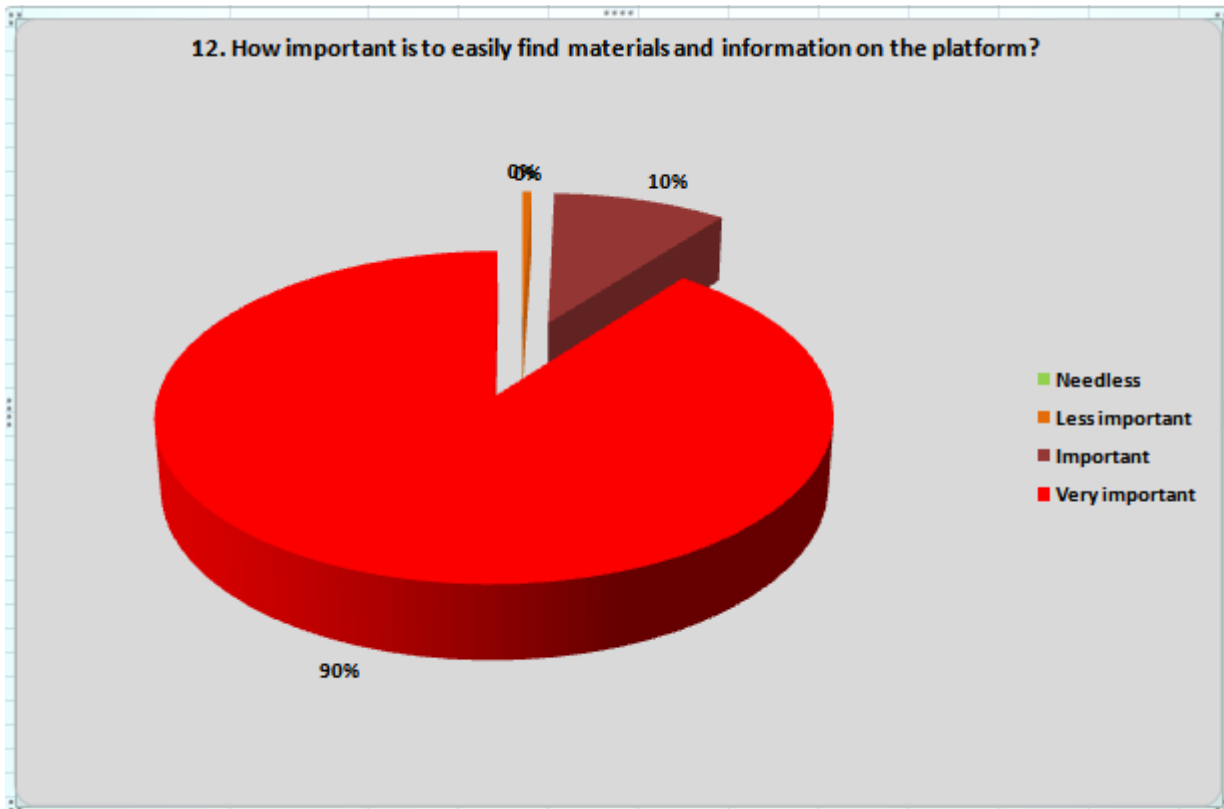


Table 11

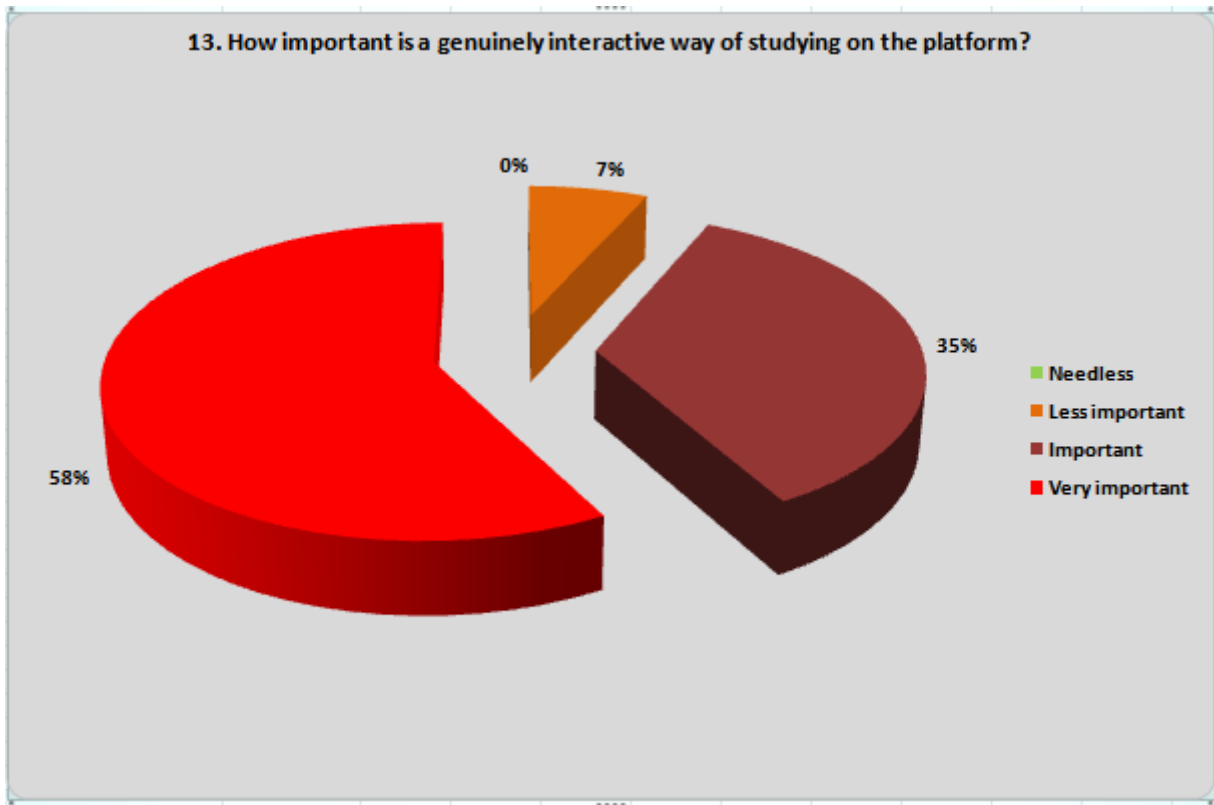
Number of answers		categorization
1	14	Needless
2	174	Less important
3	465	Important
4	337	Very important
Mean		3,14
Standard Deviation		0,73

Question 12 The replies from the twelveth question are presented in table 12



Number of answers		categorization
1	0	Needless
2	5	Less important
3	98	Important
4	889	Very important
Mean		3,89
Standard Deviation		0,28

Question 13 The replies from the thirteenth question are presented in table13



Number of answers		categorization
1	0	Needless
2	67	Less important
3	349	Important
4	576	Very important
Mean		3,51
Standard Deviation		0,60

Question 14 The replies from the fourteenth question are presented in table 14

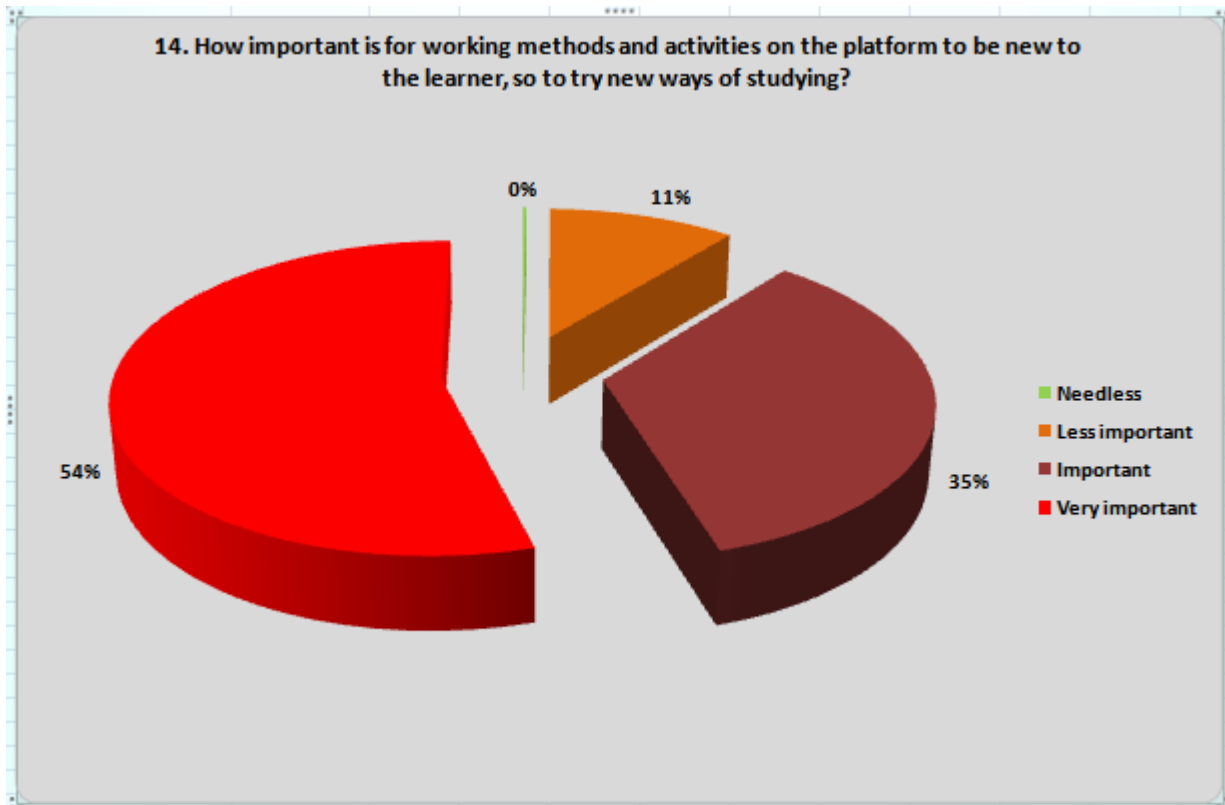
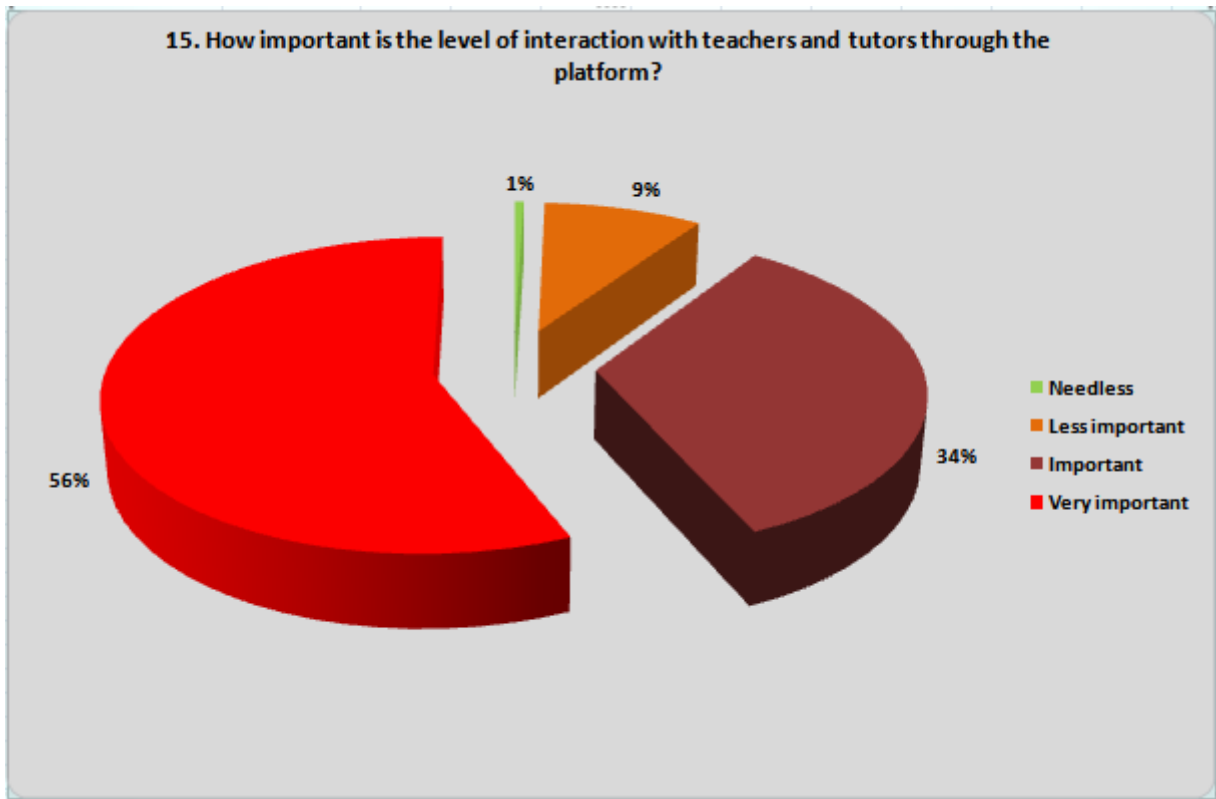


Table 14

Number of answers		categorization
1	2	Needless
2	106	Less important
3	343	Important
4	541	Very important
Mean		3,43
Standard Deviation		0,75

Question 15 The replies from the fifteenth question are presented in table 15



Number of answers		categorization
1	5	Needless
2	90	Less important
3	337	Important
4	561	Very important
Mean		3,46
Standard Deviation		0,66

Question 16 (suggestions).

Totally, 107 trainees send their suggestions. These questions were categorized in 8 themes, which were :

Reference to their request for direct application to our need.

Reference concerning encountered problems with the line connectivity.

Reference for asking more chances for interaction.

Reference on organizational issues encountered during the course.

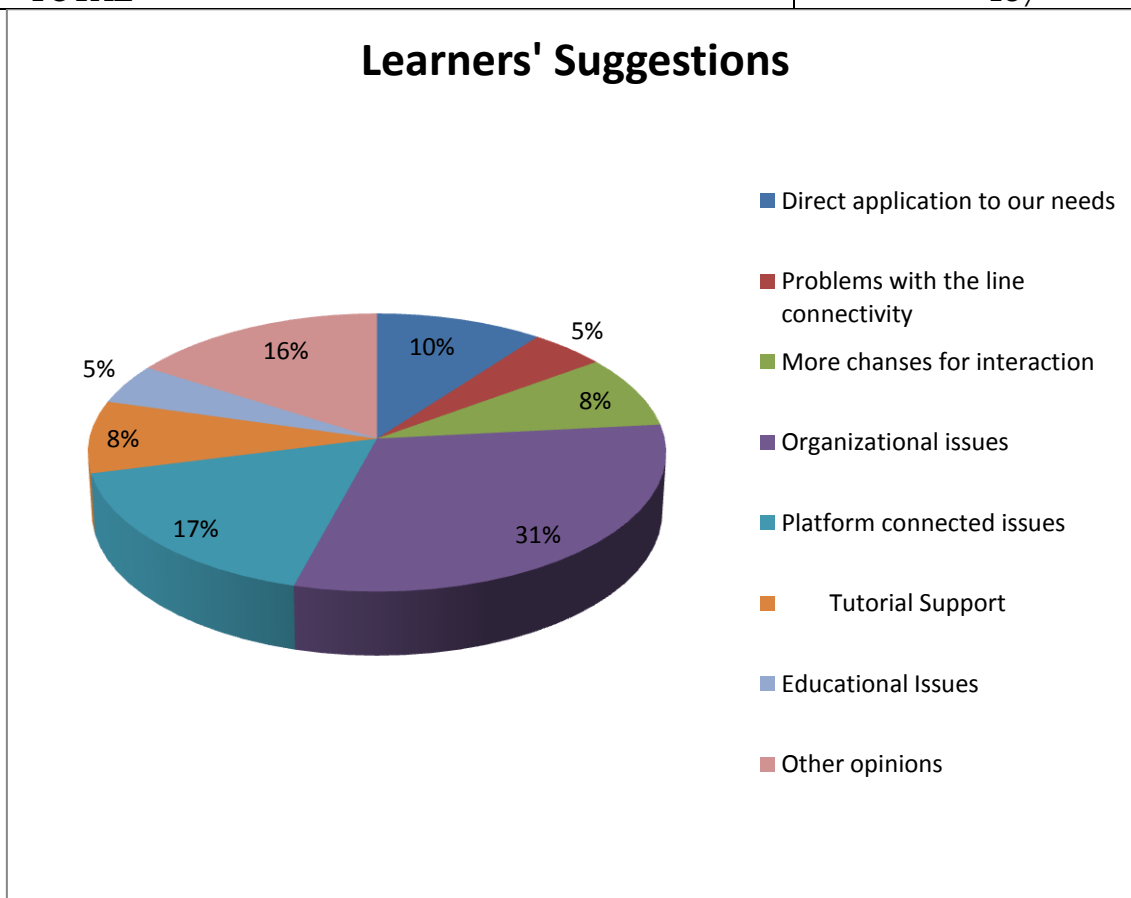
Reference on platform connected issues.

Reference concerning the tutorial support provided.

Reference on the educational Issues of the course they had experienced.

The last category included various suggestions, not included in previous categories.

Characterization of the suggestions		Number
A	Direct application to our needs	11
B	Problems with the line connectivity	5
C	More chances for interaction	9
D	Organizational issues	33
E	Platform connected issues	18
F	Tutorial Support	9
G	Educational Issues	5
H	Other opinions	17
TOTAL		107



All the replies:

A1. Although the work is very interesting I would like to have a more direct application to the course I teach (the math) or given ideas through the platform on how I could make use of on my course.

A12. it would be good to have some examples of the use of the tools given in the teaching practice, depending on the specificity of the trainees, if possible.

A13. Since we are grouped according to our specialty, it would be useful to give emphasis on assignments of our subject.

A14. I Would propose SOFTWARE THAT CAN BE WIDELY USED IN THE NURSERY and IN REGULAR CLASSES, BUT ALSO IN CLASSES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS .

A16. I would like to have more programs concerning the nursery- the hot potatoes for instance could an equivalent program with sound and vision since kindergarten children cannot not read yet.

A17. To focus on assignments readily applicable in the classroom ,for every special lesson.

A18. It would be good to have software designed for students with special needs and practical applications in the classroom, since the problems with students with special educational needs it have been multiplied.

A2. Educational material by specialty and create a special space on the platform, where trainees will have the opportunity to display innovative actions implemented in their classroom.

A25. Is THE SEMINAR ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE reentered?.

A5. I would like to be able to process each "tool" in more depth and may formulate questions and new activities that will advance the use of any "tool" depending on our needs. That is, to adapt the activities according to the interest of each team.

A30. Apart from the knowledge that we acquire in relation to the handling of various "tools", I think it would be useful to include them in "scenarios" or lesson plans so as not to remain mere knowledge of handling ...

B110. Avoid glitches sound and picture that can occur on some computers or with slower network connections.

B3. I think the courses have been created after much study and through the years have made improvements where necessary. I think the platform is very functional and serves anyone who uses it without problem. Just there Internet- constant problem on the island of Folegandros :(.

B50. Face-to-face training is a bit difficult (almost impossible) for us who are in isolated islands for practical reasons. We tried to attend another distance learning course in Rhodes with connection through you-tube and facebook and we had no sound and image. Asynchronous learning probably works better in remote places until to have better and faster internet.

B51. Overall I am very satisfied with the course, although I would suggest some improvements would be to the speed of the platform.

B9. All I have to say, having the last year experience, that the school network should not be involved because we had many problems.

C26. I believe that meetings face-to-face are very important and useful.

C28. The communication between the trainee and trainer should be quick and easy, so that any problems can be solved quickly.

C4. There should be more chances for interaction between the trainees.

C61. Provide frequent communication and answering the trainees questions.

- C66. Communication is essential for feedback in corrections cases and collaborative intervention methods for enrichment and integration work. It would be wisable to share lesson plans among the trainees.
- C67. Cooperative learning enrichment and integration work, sharing lesson plans.
- C71. More interaction and communication that involve practical applications of the tools in the classroom to current year between teachers of the same specialty.
- C72. Communities of practice.
- C95. There may be little quiz after the lesson and may give some feedback about my progress. May be a forum in the platform.
- D10. Good organization of the assignments delivered so as to have an easy look , both our own previous one and to colleagues assignments.
- D105. There is no time limit for course work submitted, at least, that the limit is broad.
- D107. The rating system should be easy to operate, or several alternatives to such use.
- D109. Sometimes there are errors in your application development, for example in the English courses one sentence can be put in two ways (contracted and uncontracted) and sometimes you considered correct in one way and others another. Also when recording oral responses not recorded either by failure of the program and not let you correct, incorrect considerándotelas.
- D111. I also very important that teams from where you are prepared to work and be compatible with the program you are working to the minimum possible problems and development of course correct.
- D29. We should not be given too many tasks and primarily tasks based on the cooperation of groups.
- D37. I think that so far the course has worked OK .To only issue was that I was stack sometimes because of pressure.
- D38. It would be useful for me to see the work and other trainees to understand the level of our effort and have a motivation for better performance!
- D44. The instructor should provide to the students a framework for dialogue and support to enable each student to realize a certain problem and experiment with alternative ways of addressing the problem. So, I think that the action of each student is 'liberated' and a dialogue is developed and there is respect for diversity and promote critical review of knowledge.
- D45. emphasis on individual needs, the profile and capabilities of the group of learners. The communication / involvement, support and preparation of activity make the whole process almost "face to face".
- D46. It is important to have flexibility concerning the time of delivering the assignments.
- D47. I Suggest to work with groups.
- D49. COOPERATIVE working WITH OTHER SCHOOLS of the same grade AT SCHOOL APPLICATION level.
- D52. The formation of virtual classes and presentation of all the participants' works after the deadline of the assignment.
- D56. To be as simple as possible and wisely organized, in order to avoid causing confusion and panic among trainees that are unfamiliar with multimedia formats.
- D57. Without knowing if it is feasible, I would like to propose a platform that would include video conferencing option. I find it very useful to be able to communicate "live " with all participants and trainers on the subject of getting to know their colleagues and of course on the quick and direct discussion and resolution of problems related to the work.

- D58. Opinion exchange on the creation of a reference work on the interactive whiteboard, and training in the use of programs that enable them to create lesson plans on the school modules.
- D59. Realistic and consistent with the level of trainees planning time required to complete each activity on such a platform.
- D65. I don't have to propose something extra, but I want to comment on the question 10 (How important do you consider to be able platform to manage groups of learners, having the ability to vary the training materials and activities between different groups?) And express my regret that although at the end of last year my seminar (TPEII) I was of interested in attending next school year's course, this year I was not selected, thus having to "chase" my participation in the seminar and eventually go into another specialty group, which might be a problem if the material varied depending on the specialty.
- D68. To have the possibility at the end of the training courses to have f2f lessons on the pedagogical implementation of the software in the classroom.
- D70. Possibly, the ability to place the lesson and videoconferencing.
- D74. To support refresher course every courses.
- D75. I think it would be instructive to take seriously the experience of trainers based on the questions and difficulties that may occasionally be expressed by trainees.
- D78. I would suggest to have the assignments graded promptly so that there is time for on-time submission of any faulty work.
- D8. Maybe smaller groups would be more functional. So applications of tools in education could be discussed in fora and integrated with teamwork.
- D80. Provide a field finder (find) past activities.
- D81. Work graded according to the degree of difficulty and time required and not all at one (1) degree.
- D89. It would be very helpful, if it were possible to review not only exams, but also "normal" assignments.
- D90. I would have added some item about transmedia storytelling that is actually the new frontier of blended learning solutions.
- D92. In my opinion the difference is made by the percentage of online and in presence sessions. This is the main parameter to be used to evaluate a blended learning course.
- D96. The scale from 1 to 4 is very short when the two extremes are 'very important' and 'totally useless'.
- D86. Provide an advisory "center" of moodle with very basic techniques to anyone interested in visiting only.
- D87. It is important for me to collect (and personalize based on the password we use) all the assignments on the site in the form of the list in an easily recovering way.
- E101. It is important that the platform offers the possibility to contact tutors or other participants via videoconference.
- E103. Not only PDFs. The platforms should become platforms evolve to become Operating Systems Learning. Explore possibilities of platforms tailored to teaching and student learning (EduCanon, SplashTop, etc ..). Leave enough for the casual but well-focused learning space.
- E108. The presentation and quality of content, and facilitating their study in the platform, and to study content through scorms usually quite uncomfortable. It is preferable html. I think this is another important aspect.
- E15. Generally I would like to understand easily the instructions and the specific goals using easy software that is not required to download them but I can not work without bothering my pc, or at least to be free from viruses! .

- E19. Be informed with programs with interactive tasks.
- E20. Personally, I would like to operate the platform in such a way that it is profitable both for myself and my work.
- E21. I would like to operate the platform in such a way to feel jolly, to get more comfortable with the pc and I become better at my job.
- E23. I hope that the platform is configured to directly help us become better, personally and professionally.
- E24. I would like the platform is designed so that novice users can use it.
- E53. I think this kind of platform is a very good suggestion.
- E54. I believe that the formation of the seminar through the training platform, having the experience of the two previous sessions, is satisfactory, yet ideal to set up and operate a community of teachers that will help us all to use ICT in teaching practice.
- E55. It is important that the platform is easy to use and functional and has a variety of tools to meet the needs and interests of each one.
- E69. At the present this platform is only for asynchronous distance learning. It could allow later also synchronous distance learning.
- E73. Teleconference.
- E76. There could be many educational activities using the platform, such as conducting a "conference" on the implementation of the educational tools that we learn the platform, or the common sequential writing a fairy tale.
- E77. This platform actually has a lot of potential, but has several glitches and responsiveness to the trainee, but all I know is malfunctioning and is slow in customization when designing activities.
- Would it be preferable to use e-class which such notice is used by all the universities? Is it more functional environment?
- E79. I should report THE BLACKBOARD PLATFORM that is USED IN JOINT TRAINING MODEL .
- E97. I think that focusing on the platform is not so relevant for blended learning. Platforms can be very different, you can even use other tools, but the real essence of blended learning is the methodology, not the technology.
- E98. The learning management system is not so important, and the same LMS can work or not, depending on how the blended course is designed.
- F106. FOR ME THE FACT THAT THE FEEDBACK (CORRECTED EXERCISE SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT ...) HOWEVER PROVIDES FAST SECURITY AND TRUST ME ON WHAT I'M WEARING JUST.
- F27. The instructions given to solve the exercises are clear and understandable.
- F31. DETAILED EXPLANATION.
- F22. I would like a platform in a simple and more functional form.
- F32. Very important for me is to have clear instructions for the assignments.
- F33. I want to have clear instructions for resolving the assignments and the examples given.
- F34. Detailed instructions.
- F62. To note what work was not clear enough to add information.
- F63. Be given information on where and how to use each assignment we do.
- G100. In my experience there are other parameters that deeply influence a blended learning curriculum, like motivation, duration of the course, starting level of knowledge, ecc.
- G104. Adapting to student.
- G36. Group working and enquiry based learning and possibility of repeating similar actions to be familiar with the software.

G60. Activities to be related to e twinning and erasmus + .
G85. Contact with twitter, instructions for formatting the computer, repeat the instructions of blog making.
H101. Good availability and patience on both sides.
H102. The Complete issues without sub turn others. As an example of the English language, which are one to turn into other, others in others (learning, etc etc.
H39. The answers previously given are not only mine but they come also from other trainees too.
H40. I have reported important elements in relation to the platform and I can not think of anything more that you have not included.
H41. Not to add anything if everything mentioned above is performed.
H42. Note from the part of the trainee's needs in teaching and learning tools and practice them for easy use.
H43. The Trainee should disclose his/her NEEDS for the TEACHING TOOLS AND train on it.
H48. There is always room for improvement fill revaluation !!!! You know better than anyone the gaps ... and how they could be filled !!!
H64. It is very important voluntary and participatory action all the trainers and the trainees an undeniably important project.
H82. My experience as a trainee in your tutorial for Internet Security was really interesting. There could be similar to the training characteristics of the environment used.
H83. Facilitate and promote the use of such techniques and methods within the school in every way.
H84. No! All activities that took place are excellent, and most of these can be applied in the classroom if there is suitable equipment.
H88. I think we should stop making differences among blended learning, distance learning, face-to-face learning; and start talking only about Learning. Technology is so pervasive nowadays that it has no sense to refer still to such old categories.
H91. It is difficult for me covering all different types of blended learning situations. Even in my short experience they have been so different, that is impossible to establish a unique criteria.
H93. Are you going to publish results of this questionnaire? It would have been good to give the possibility to follow results.
H94. Adopting open source solutions is in my opinion an added value.
H99. The questions are not so relevant in my opinion. Even answering with the highest score for each item, it still misses the point of finding the real essence of an efficient blended learning solution.

Multilateral Grundtvig Project
539717-LLP-1-2013-1-IT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein.